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Research on the Specialized Independent Developing Model for Non-English Major ESP Teachers

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Abstract

Based on analyzing the necessity of transforming from EGP teachers to ESP teachers and the social demand for talents, abilities and qualities which the qualified ESP teachers should have are summarized. Meanwhile, combining with the current situation of ESP teachers, independent developing strategies for ESP teachers are proposed, which provide rational reference for successful transformation to ESP teachers.

Key words: ESP teaching; ESP teachers; Transformation; Specialized independent development

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INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of diversification and integration process of the global economy and the increasing growth of party exchange, social requirements for English abilities become more and more urgent, and the characteristics of tool and application for English are more prominent. Traditional EGP (English for General Purpose) teaching can't adapt to the development of the times any longer. Our target for talents training is gradually transited from fundamental type to communicating and comprehensive type. ESP (English for Specific Purpose) teaching arises at this historic moment. It has not only injected new vitality to college English teaching, but also proposed higher requirements to the transformation of English teachers.

1. THE DEVELOPING PROCESS OF ESP TEACHING

EGP teaching and ESP teaching are two stages in college English learning, and they are continuous unity. ESP teaching is continuation and extension on the basis of EGP teaching, which not only focuses on cultivating "language ability" but also pays more attention to cultivate "communicative competence" of students. It aims to develop English teaching mode with practical application in the specific occupation scene. As for the category of linguistics, ESP teaching is a branch of English language teaching, rather than professional teaching, which is a variant of the English language in different professions. ESP gets more profit from professional teaching methods and allows students to learn a language in professional practice. Therefore, only combining the EGP with ESP teaching effectively can we complete the mission of university English teaching successfully.

ESP teaching has experienced nearly 40 years development in English teaching and research field in China, and roughly can be divided into three stages. In the 1980s, it is in the stage of introducing and absorbing foreign ESP research results; In the 1990s, it is in the initial stage of domestic scholars to independently researching and exploration; In the early 21st century, it is in the stage of further development in all subjects and levels. ESP teaching has experienced wide, deep, meticulous and practical evolution.

It is reported that, until now, more than 30 colleges and universities in China have set up the ESP-related master points. Research topics about ESP are also common, and some universities have enrolled the ESP teaching model into their education reformation plans. It indicates the growing emphasis on researching ESP in the academic field and also marks the formalization for the ESP talent training in China. Searching in the Chinese knowledge resource database during 1980 to 2000, only 126 journal

articles about ESP are found; while during 2001 to 2011, the number of journal papers soared to 1252 and of master's degree thesis adds up to 31. This demonstrates that the ESP research enthusiasm is now increasing. At the same time, conferences about ESP research further promote the development of the ESP research in our country. For example, "English for Specific Purpose in Asia" was held in Chongqing University in 2009, which is the first ESP international academic annual meeting about ESP in China. Journal "Chinese ESP research" was founded in Beijing in January, 2011, and "Chinese ESP research summit forum and ESP teachers' seminar" was held in July, 2010. These conferences promote the development of ESP teaching and research and expand the influence of ESP.

Ability training of English for special purpose can't be fulfilled without efficient ESP teaching and a team of high quality teachers is the basic guarantee of ESP teaching quality. The just held Eighteen Session of the Communist Party Congress pointed out that, in order to promote higher education "connotation type development", we should take "student-centered" and "morality education" as our fundamental task, improving the quality of personnel training and adapt to the needs of economic and social development. Therefore, it is imperative to strengthen ESP teacher team construction. It is imminent to improve the ESP teachers' comprehensive quality and innovate ESP teachers' independent development. All of above mentioned needs us to conduct in-depth excavation and exploration.

Shandong International University (SIU) is a higher occupation college based on applying foreign language and business and trade, including 11 foreign languages and 14 application foreign language majors. It has the most kinds of foreign languages university among universities in Shandong province. SIU always adheres to the students as the center, take the employment as the guidance, strives for the development by the high quality as the school idea, and cultivate the "foreign language + professional + skill + integrated humanities quality" international talents as the goal. In order to improve teaching quality and academic level, the author has been engaging in English major courses teaching from 2001 to 2008. In 2009 School of International Business in SIU opened the majors of logistics management, exhibition planning and management. The author becomes an ESP teacher to teach exhibition English and logistics English. Through practice of three years, the author has encountered many difficulties and problems in her teaching process. However, after studying hard and striving to explore, I has summarized some practical experiences on how to improve ESP teachers' quality and how to develop ESP teaching. In 2011, as the principal investigator of one of the key scientific research projects "the non - English Major College ESP Teaching Exploration and Practice at Higher Vocational Colleges", the author starts to study

ESP teaching and ESP teachers' transformation problem with her colleagues. In this process, I have some thoughts and would like to share with colleagues and readers then want to discuss it in this paper.

2. THE NECESSITY OF TRANSFORMATION FROM EGP TEACHERS TO ESP TEACHERS

Traditional EGP teaching model broke away from the practical work and social demand, which blindly let the students "learning English" instead of "using English". Since late 1990s, college English teaching has been faced with more and more doubtful sound. Feedback information from employers shows that professional English talents are in short supply in finance, logistics, exhibition and IT industry etc. CET Levels of students are not proportional to their abilities of English practical application. The majority of graduates in the enterprise seem still a "semi-finished", such as they can't communicate with customers in English fluently, can't write English letters well enough, and can't translate investment project books smoothly and so on. It shows that students can't connect their English with related professional knowledge well, and not meet the needs of the employers. This embarrassing situation of learning without practice confirms that ESP teachers have to transform from EGP teachers.

2.1 The Need of English Education Reform in Colleges

Bilingual teaching has become a common hot topic of college English teaching and professional teaching reform. As a new teaching model, bilingual teaching is taught in bilingual throughout the professional knowledge system, which is based on the subject. Its main purpose is to utilize two languages for grasping concepts, theories, methods, and to think and express well. In a sense, EGP teaching is the foundation, ESP teaching is a transitional bridge, and bilingual education is the ultimate goal. But there is a gulf between EGP and bilingual teaching, and learners have not yet reached the level of existing bilingual requirement. Therefore, we require a teaching link as a bridge---ESP to promote EGP transition to bilingual teaching smoothly.

2.2 The Unique Way to Improve Teaching Quality

ESP teaching is a kind of "student centered" teaching method which is based on the target demand analysis. Learning motivation of students stems from their needs, and is to achieve the ultimate goal of practical application. In order to improve their teaching quality, ESP teachers have to follow the guideline "for the purpose of service, employment-oriented". In order to satisfy the student's individual maximum needs and the social needs, English language teaching must transform from a cultural object to a tool target.

2.3 Providing Guarantee for Realizing Teachers' Echelon Construction

Teachers' echelon is a teachers' group, which is set up on the basis of optimized combination of ages, titles and educational structures etc. The growth of young teachers needs help from experienced veteran teachers. At the same time, elder teachers can update their knowledge and change their concepts during sharing resources with young teachers. Especially, cooperation of English teachers with professional teachers is mutually beneficial and win-win. The change of social needs and teaching patterns requires ESP teachers continuously improve their professional quality and practical ability. Therefore, establishing ESP teachers' educational modes, exploring ESP teachers' professional development strategies, and realizing ESP teachers' echelon construction has become a top priority.

3. ESP TEACHERS' CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

At present, even though ESP has developed, it has not become the mainstream. It needs to improve students' English proficiency and to strengthen the power of teachers' echelons. The shortage of ESP teachers and the lack of teaching experience are the primary problem to be solved currently in the process of professionalization. ESP teachers do not have enough understanding in psychology and there is no ready-made model which can be used for reference in the process of realizing the goal of linguistics tool. At the same time, ESP teachers are facing pressure of their specific development direction, combining with the lack of guidance opinions provided by education sectors. Thus, it has caused the confusion of ESP teachers' psychological uncertainty.

Many college ESP teachers teach both public English and professional English. They are struggling to cope with the classroom teaching in full days. They are too busy to study and train for improving their professional ability and knowledge level, let alone to study ESP teaching rules and methods with more energy. Moreover, now the treatment and status of ESP teachers do not draw enough attention of the education departments and colleges, which results in the instability of ESP teachers.

The author started to teach not only exhibition English but also logistics English in 2009. There were 22 classes per week. Because of only having two ESP teachers in our college, we taught part of the public foreign language courses as well. One difficulty is that we had too much class, the other difficulty and the most confused one is the lack of professional knowledge. The textbook was quoted from original English textbooks, and there were no reference books for teachers and answer books of after-class exercises. For the knowledge of each chapter, the teacher could only borrow the corresponding Chinese version of the convention and exhibition professional

textbooks, coupling with their own understanding, combining with professional English vocabulary expression, then translate the article to the students bluntly. Our teachers of class had paid great efforts, but the teaching effect was poor and both teachers and students felt puzzling.

4. CAPACITY AND QUALITY POSSESSED FOR ESP TEACHERS IN CURRICULUM

Theoretically, ESP teaching is a branch of linguistics. ESP teachers should have the quality "width" rather than "depth". They must master knowledge of various demands. But EGP teachers only have foreign language ability, and do not possess professional knowledge. While ESP teachers and bilingual teachers have similar characteristics and they must consider both language and profession. But their center of attention is different. ESP teacher's center of gravity and the foothold focus on the language, but bilingual teachers on the content of professional courses.

Guo Jianjing points out in her book "English for Special Purpose Teaching and Research" that: Qualified ESP teachers need to undertake the following roles--ESP curriculum designers, analysts of need, commentators (to assess learners' learning status and select proper materials), mediators (to cope with the relationship among learners, project leaders and professional teachers), partners (to collaborate with professional teachers) and researchers. It requires ESP teachers to have solid English professional knowledge, corresponding ESP professional knowledge and teaching theory knowledge. They must improve their own knowledge and professional, teaching, scientific research, and other comprehensive qualities continuously. In order to make college English lessons more lively and interesting, ESP teachers must learn to obtain and screen effective information, to read more books, to observe more, and to think more. Particularly, they should pay more attention to related knowledge about professional learning and vocational teaching. They should arm their minds with new concepts and new knowledge. They should learn about the latest development and enrich the teaching reserve for making new knowledge, which should be internalized into their existing knowledge construction.

The promotion of ESP teachers' quality should be a dynamic whole system, along with the development of the times, and be a changing and perfect system along with the teachers' individual progress constantly. In the action research process, they should realize their self-correction of teaching and their self-development through their self-evaluation and self-reflection constantly.

5. APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES OF PROFESSIONAL AND INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT FOR ESP TEACHERS

Improvement of ESP teachers' qualities, integration and optimization of ESP teacher resources, is an effective approach to improve ESP teaching quality and realize their self-development. Therefore, education departments and colleges can take measures from the following three aspects: the first one is to establish the ESP teachers education qualification system, to make ESP teachers legal; the second one is to build up educational institutions or center for special training of ESP teachers, to make ESP teachers standard; the third one is to open online ESP teachers education curriculum through internet and corpus, to make ESP teachers special. To seek professional development for ESP teachers, one needs to proceed from the ideological and operational levels. Specifically, it should be reflected in the following six aspects:

5.1 Change ESP Teachers' Ideas Actively and Update Their Teaching Concepts

ESP teaching is a new and developing subject. ESP teachers' occupation development, improvement of quality, independent development and team building are all new directions. Swales (1985) argues that it is more accurate to instead "ESP teacher (teachers)" with "ESP practitioner (practitioners)". The impulsion of ESP teachers' development stems from their independent development consciousness, and it is mainly reflected in the following two aspects.

Shift of Teacher's Attitude

ESP teachers should get rid of the "teacher-centered" idea, and establish the teaching thought of "taking the student as the center, student is the developed main body". ESP teacher should change from the knowledge converter to the learning facilitator, and transform from the leader of teaching to the researcher of curriculum research and development. They should encourage students to find problems, ask questions and then solve them. They should establish of the teaching system of "problem-centered", and enhance the enthusiasm of students to participate in courses. ESP teachers should take all students' needs as the starting point, and persist in five aspects, namely, always adhere to education first, insist in lifelong development, adhere to take students as the main body, adhere to love students. They should take teaching as a basis, and take scientific research as their ideals to cultivate innovative and practical talented persons.

Transformation of Teacher Status

Traditional education thought that teachers should be the embodiment of knowledge and academic authorities, and students are only receivers of knowledge. All the knowledge that teachers give them is correct. Students which do not ask questions are good students, and

students should not know so much as teachers. In fact, the status of teachers and students should be equal, and they are both main body in the process of education. Classroom teachers could not own monologue discourse right, but only the dialogue discourse right. Teachers and students should communicate equally. Teachers should utilize linguistic knowledge to stimulate students, and students can use professional knowledge to enlighten their teachers. Supporting by this kind of common interests of teaching and learning between teachers and students, they can exchange meaningfully in the classroom, and co-construct their own knowledge system. It is contemporary teacher-student relationship and it accurately reflects their equal status. The atmosphere of the classroom should be democratic. ESP teachers can give their platform to students, let students explain the technology as professional teachers, allow students to make their voices heard, and learn professional knowledge gradually and deeply through review and discussion. ESP teachers should fully respect students' right of participation, voice and initiative, and encourage students to ask questions, give students a stage to show individual character, to find your self- insufficiency, and stimulate learning power.

5.2 To Accelerate the Adjustment of Teachers' Knowledge Structure

Keeping on learning ability is the primary condition to be a competent ESP teacher. Improving their literacy is the inevitable choice in ESP teaching to avoid being eliminated. ESP teachers' knowledge structure consists of three aspects: Firstly, a solid English language and cultural knowledge. English is a media and core means in ESP teaching, and is a tool for learning and expanding professional knowledge. Only having their original English skills, ESP teachers cannot match the ESP classroom characteristics. They need to keep pace with the times and improve their language skills. Secondly, excellent theoretical teaching knowledge, including education, psychology, English and professional teaching theory. The teaching methodology is the efficient support, is a guide to effective teaching baton and is a required course for teachers. Thirdly, related professional disciplines of theoretical and practical knowledge. Professional knowledge is target navigation. ESP teachers should have a comprehensive understanding of professional course content and theory, make full use of English tool, unify the professional knowledge and practice knowledge organically, so as to improve their English communication ability and comprehensive professional quality.

From the way of ESP teachers knowledge acquisition, we can't only learn autonomously in school textbooks, such as studying professional books, learning professional knowledge and English language theory, but also through cooperation with professional teachers, to absorb the teaching and thinking way of professional teachers, to observe the professional communication behavior in

practice. Also they can go to the industry for practicing and accumulating experience in practice knowledge.

For example, the exhibition English teaching is to use the English language to exhibition and conference planning. ESP teachers should understand the process of conference or exhibition and related technical term English expression. We should combine the convention and exhibition industry knowledge with English language ability training closely, through the exhibition inviting, booth and other training. A lot of professional exhibition vocabularies are different in common English environment. Such as, "host" in public English is "主人", but in exhibition English should be translated into "承办单位"; "stand" is usually be translated into "站立", and in the exhibition is "展位"; "Logistics" is the meaning of "后勤", but is "物流" in logistics and exhibition specialty.

5.3 To Establish School-Based Training Mechanism, and Implement Interdisciplinary Team Teaching

ESP teachers' training has a long way to go. As the process is continuous, content is extensive, and it involves many professions and multidiscipline, so it is necessary to establish an effective training mechanism. For example, logistics covers from raw material to parts procurement, handling, transport, packaging, warehousing, transportation, distribution processing, information processing and other basic functions. It is a marginal crossed discipline, and is closely related to the knowledge of international trade, marketing, e-commerce, accounting, human resources. It passes through the entire commercial activities. When explaining logistics professional vocabularies, we should expand the knowledge of other disciplines related professional vocabularies and basic concepts.

School-based training is an in-service training in school, and is a school resources-based platform to build for the autonomous development of ESP teachers. It mainly has the following advantages: ① ESP teachers don't have to be out of work, and it can make the training and teaching closely contact. ② Colleges can arrange training time and content according to the school and teacher's actual situation. It can maintain the continuity and persistence of training. ③It eliminates the fees for full-time teachers training and lightens the burden on teachers and schools. School-based education can help teachers build and enrich their knowledge systems, to expand and improve teachers' professional knowledge and professional skills. School-based training should be initiated, organized and planed by the school, and to improve ESP teachers' teaching and research capacity through teaching and research activities.

The core of college English teaching is "competency-based", emphasizing on the cultivation of English application ability matching with the occupation. EGP and ESP can't "each does things in his own way" and

should organize interdisciplinary ESP teaching team or teaching and research section. ESP teachers' professional development is a lifelong "independent development" process. Interdisciplinary cooperation team is a revolution to teacher culture and living style. ESP teachers and professional teachers should cooperate dynamically, pay attention to discipline and professional development automatically, and explore teaching and academic fronted problems actively. Then, they can achieve complementary advantages. In addition, ESP teachers should, learn useful and practical instructional strategies or methods for promoting reflection on practice and improving their operational level, through sharing practical experience with professional teachers.

Advocating the concept of cooperative learning and constructing the atmosphere of teachers' interaction and resource sharing, is the need to enhance the professional level of teachers and teaching ability, also is the inevitable demands for teachers' professional development. Such as, to regularly carry out forum between logistics professional teachers and ESP teachers, to put forward to problems and puzzles of teaching in time, then discuss them together. Professional teachers should introduce the system and basic content of logistics course to ESP teachers, and recommend or provide books to ESP teachers for reference and jointly pay close attention to the latest industry information and development trend.

5.4 To Establish Bidirectional Interactive Training Programs Between Colleges and Enterprises

At present, practical lessons get less attention due to little promotion in ESP teaching. Many ESP teaching, and even professional teachers believed that they had no channel of communication with the industry, and then treat it negatively. This problem can be overcome by two ways. Firstly, colleges can sign cooperation agreements with enterprises, to build school-enterprise cooperation training project together and arrange ESP teachers for learning in relevant units. In order to enrich professional knowledge and to improve the professional skills, ESP teachers should be allowed as collaborators to participate in the enterprise projects. For example, MICE English teachers can be involved in the promotion and planning of the new exhibition, help to write the plans and invitations and organize public relations activities, etc. Secondly, ESP teachers themselves can go out and seek for training opportunities actively. Colleges should encourage teachers to do part-time job in holiday for understanding the operation and management mode and the present situation and trend. It will help ESP teachers to understand the requirements of the employer on the quality and ability of graduates. ESP teacher can be personally involved in professional practice and actual operation of the application, so as to further enrich and deepen ESP teacher's understanding to theory knowledge. It will lay a solid foundation for the later teaching

program formulation, curriculum, teaching methods and evaluation means.

ESP teacher should actively join trade associations or clubs as memberships. They should attend the annual meetings and industry seminars, concern about the dynamics of the industry, make friends with industry practitioners and often communicate with them and exchange, to get the latest industry information and business case. School-based teaching and research is not only based on school, but also open up. They should organize ESP teacher go to comprehensive university related to attend a lecture or discussion, or invite graduate students from college who is engaging in the relative profession to return to their Alma Mater, walk into the classroom and communicate with junior, senior for exchanging heart-to-heart. They will enlighten students how to use the knowledge more quickly into the work by their own personal experience and understanding.

5.5 To Establish of ESP Teachers Qualification System and Incentive Mechanism

Colleges should establish ESP teachers' qualification of access system, through the test to evaluate the level of teachers, so as to standardize teachers and improve the quality of them. It will make ESP teachers grow under strict rules and norms. Suggestions are as follows. Firstly, they should build up the ESP teacher qualification system and request the teacher certificates. They should encourage teachers as soon as possible to obtain relevant certificate or match with professional qualifications, such as logistician qualification certificate, exhibition planner qualification certificate, computer English qualification certificate, etc. ESP teachers' qualifications are eligible for ESP teaching, and the implementation of ESP teaching should be a year-end evaluation content and index, in order to enhance teachers' sense of responsibility. Secondly, preference should be given to them including income distribution, promotion and welfare and so on. Emphasis on ESP teaching and teachers should be strengthened which can be encouraged by reducing the amount of hours, and measures to improve lesson fees. Thirdly, it is recommended that each region should set up corresponding policies to encourage higher education institutions and support qualified enterprises to establish ESP teaching faculty training bases. They should create conditions to for ESP teachers to continue to learn for and provide a supportive environment to enhance their literacy.

5.6 To Promote Teaching by Scientific Research, to Be a Qualified ESP Researcher

The summary of research found that ESP teaching research level mainly focus on college English major, namely on the majority of undergraduate level and the majority of English majors. In 2010, in the first and second volumes of "Chinese ESP Study" only one article is involved in ESP teaching in higher vocational college English,

respectively. Research on higher vocational English ESP teaching is weak, and it has not drawn enough attention by ESP teaching theory field. It will leave a large space for ESP teachers to develop their initiatives of them, help them to explore actively, and find ESP teaching rules and patterns as well as provide assistance for the development of ESP teaching.

In short, ESP course is a prelude to expand Chinese students' horizons in China towards the international areas of specialization. Its development and expansion is the necessity of the social development in college English teaching, also is the need of practical training of compound talents. Only transformation can ESP teachers be qualified for this sacred mission. Colleges and universities should continue to accelerate and improve the ESP faculty specialization for self-development, interdisciplinary cooperation in teaching practice. We will actively breakthrough limitation of subject, so that the teaching of English and professional English could combine, and the occupation demand echoes. Our target is to create a teachers team with both solid English language application ability and industry common sense, with both abilities to adapt to the relevant professional high-quality and high-skilled personnel training needs. Only by means of this, can we fulfill ESP teaching successfully.

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